

KY Tech-HJH ATC welding student wins Tulsa Welding School “Best Welder”

Jacob Sexton, a senior in welding instructor Chris King’s program, used his technical education and skills training to win “Best Welder” at the Tulsa Welding School competition held in Jacksonville, FLA on Friday, March 5. From a field of 141 competitors from across the nation, Sexton rose above all others and earned a full scholarship to the school worth \$16,000.

Photo: Sexton receives full scholarship certificate from Dr. Harold Saulsby, Tulsa Welding School executive director (l) and Scott Lavine, assistant exec. director (r).



Students in the competition were required to weld together 5 pieces of metal according to a set of blueprints. Sexton was joined by fellow KY Tech-Hughes Jones/Harrodsburg ATC welding students Jacob Record and Seth Blevins. Both Record and Blevins filled out enrollment applications for Tulsa Welding School and each “received a \$500 scholarship for competing,” said King.

Sexton:

"The competition was awesome and I'm glad Mr. King could be there when we competed. He is a great teacher and we are better welders because of what we have learned in class. I won a full scholarship because of what he taught me.

"Welding will be my career and I expect to make a good living doing something that I like to do."



According to King, Tulsa officials are extremely impressed with Kentucky welding students because of their skills level.



Back row: Jacob Record, Instructor Chris King and Seth Blevins.
Front row: Jacob Sexton.

Chris King, AWS-CAWI, CWE:

"Getting to go to this competition was a one of a kind lifetime experience for me and my students. The experience was even better because what they worked for became a reality."

"Over the years, there have been times when I asked myself, why am I doing this? Why do I continue to fight this never ending battle? My question was answered in Jacksonville when they called Jacob's name as the overall 1st place Best Welder winner."

"I was not standing near him, but I could see him making his way through the crowd. Jacob could not see me. On his way to receive his award – a full scholarship to Tulsa – I could hear him yell for me – 'Mr. King, Mr. King, where is Mr. King?' Before he went to receive

his award, he ran up to me and hugged my neck and said – thank you. That moment in time is frozen in my memory. What a thrill."

"I love the relationships that I get to build with my students. More importantly, seeing them succeed is a powerful reinforcement in maintaining high expectations for learning and motivating students to succeed. It's true – Kentucky Tech makes a difference in the lives of students because we help them get ready for postsecondary education or go into a career."

Getting to the competition turned out to be quite an ordeal for instructor Chris King as funds for out of state travel were not available. So, King's advisory committee and parents of his students raised money to pay his way because they wanted him to be there as an advisor. Prior to leaving for the competition, King taught class on Friday and then drove to Jacksonville. He was determined to make it before the competition began Saturday morning.

And, as a result of being able to attend, King, like all instructors, was provided with valuable supplies donated by Lincoln Electric, a sponsor of the Tulsa Welding School competition. King brought home welding rods, heavy duty welding gloves and welding jackets. Another load of material was shipped to the school via UPS that included resource materials – welding books, pre-made tests, and a new grinder.

"In this time of economic hardship, additional supplies are even more valuable for my students," said King. "All in all, our students and school made out very well by attending this national open competition."

KY Tech-Monroe County ATC welding students Grayson Harlan, Curtis Winters, and Derrick Irvin also competed and placed in the top 20 out of 141 competitors.

"We are proud of how our students competed and congratulate them on their top 20 accomplishment. Mr. Shannon Smith, our welding instructor, has done a fine job of teaching them the skills they need to succeed and by encouraging them to go to the next level," said principal Lee Ann Wall. "All three students have signed intent letters for the school and completed their financial aid."

KY Tech-C.E. McCormick ATC welding students place in top 15

Damian Marshall was as excited as his students when they called to tell him they had placed at the competition. Taylor Rydzewski placed 3rd and received a \$500 scholarship. Adam McGrath placed 11th and received an auto darkening welding hood and some welding gloves. "The boys did an excellent job and I am very proud of them," said Marshall.



Taylor Rydzewski:

"The experience at Tulsa was beneficial. The instructors helped me with any questions I had with the school and program. My plan is to become a pipeline or shutdown welder, I see Tulsa providing me with the skills and knowledge I need to succeed."

Adam McGrath:

"It was a great experience and I have benefited from every aspect of it. The skills I learned from Mr. Marshall were very helpful in allowing me to place. I believe Tulsa will help me further my skills and make my future as a pipeline welder a success."

"Tulsa's staff is dedicated to the student to help us gain the knowledge and skills we need. I look forward to making my dream a reality thanks to the many that have helped me and will help me."



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